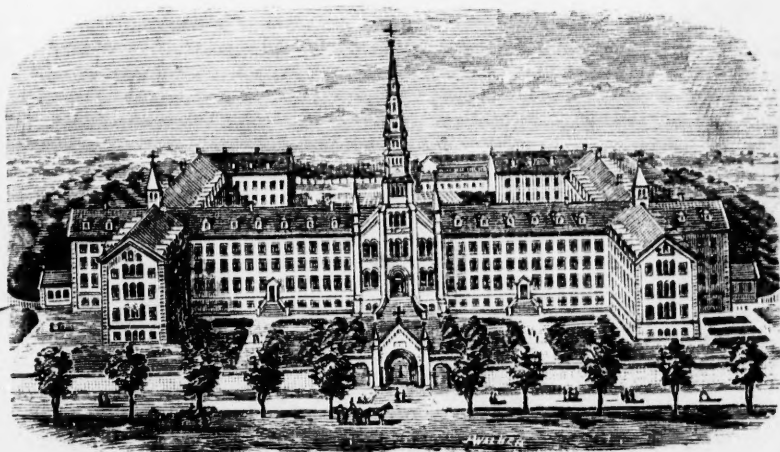


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REMINISCENCE

OF MY VISIT TO THE



GREY NUNNERY

(General Hospital,)

MONTREAL.

BIBLIOTHÈQUE FAUTEUX





MARIE-MARGUERITE DUFROST DE LA JEMMER AIS
(WIDOW YOVILLE)
FOUNDRESS OF THE SISTERS OF CHARITY (GREY NUNS), MONTREAL.
BORN OCTOBER 15TH, 1701.—DIED DECEMBER 23RD, 1771.

REMINISCENCE

OF MY VISIT TO THE

GREY NUNNERY

(GENERAL HOSPITAL,)

GUY STREET, MONTREAL.

TO WHICH IS ADDED

A FEW NOTES AND EXPLANATORY REMARKS,

ALL OF WHICH

The Reader will find worthy of perusal.

A VISITOR

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ERAIS

MONTREAL.

1771.

"This is the "Grey Nunnery, Sir," were the words uttered by my Jehu, as he drew up before a stately building of massive stone, covering an extent of several acres, extending from Dorchester, by Guy, up to St. Catherine's street. "But, my good man," said I, "the establishment I want to visit is one of the oldest in the country, and what I see before me is of recent date, nay, more it is only in its infancy as I conjecture from the unfinished wing. Is there no error here?" These last words were uttered in a querulous tone, for although old enough to have acquired experience, I am not yet master of my feelings when on asking to see one thing I am shown another, but my conductor, evincing no surprise, answered me with the greatest simplicity that: "For good reasons, the old "Grey Nunnery" had been partly thrown down and the Sisters with all their poor folks had come to the new one. If you go inside, Sir, they will tell you all about it."

This was just what I intended, fully resolved to see all worth visiting in the British Provinces and mentally hoping nothing would happen, this time, to hinder me from accomplishing my design.

Thirty years ago, on the 8th of July 1852, I came to Montreal with a similar intention, and arriving by the evening train, put up at the St. Lawrence Hall. The following morning a fire broke out in the East end, which spreading with such rapidity, among the wooden tenements, set that whole part in a blaze. Eleven hundred houses were consumed during the day. The heat which was already great, becoming intolerable through the intensity of the flames and the suffocating smoke, made me shift my quarters and fly from a city which, though surrounded by the magnificent St. Lawrence on one side and the Ottawa river on the other, was devoid of Aqueducts to furnish sufficient water to quell the raging element. I fled from Canada and like the "Wandering Jew," I have been literally flying ever since. The old proverb says: "A rolling stone gathers no moss," but I say, every one to his own taste. Mine is a preference for leaves, and like all old people I gratify it, in adding new sheets to the journals sent from time to time to the young folks for whom I scribble off descriptions of the places I visit. To former manuscripts, which certain nephews and nieces of mine assure me they read with interest, I add the present details relating to the "Grey Nunnery," all of which I have taken from the life of the Foundress or received viva-voce from the Sisters, while, as the Janitor of the Institution calls it, "Going around."


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"THREE hundred and forty-six years ago, on the 2nd October 1535, Jacques-Cartier, with a small company of French soldiers and sailors under his command, stood for the first time on the top of the mountain crowning the Indian city or town of Hochelaga, and discovering an immense extent of fine country interspersed with rivers, woods, hills and islands, he was filled with feelings of joy and gratitude and gave to the elevation the name of Mount Royal, which, with small change, has since extended to the city. Truly the name was most appropriately chosen. From the summit that noble prospect met his eye which at this day, is the delight of tourists. But greatly changed is the scene since the Breton voyageur gazed upon it. Now, town, dome and spire, wh to sail and gliding steamer, the magnificent Victoria Bridge spanning the river, all tend to enhance the view; but then East, West and South, the forest was over all, while the broad blue line of the great St. Lawrence gleamed amidst the foliage. Cartier, on his return to France, described his visit to this mountain, and recommended it as a favorable site for a settlement, but he did not live to see his idea carried out. 3 : A

Twenty years passed on, ere the island was again visited by a white man. In 1609, Champlain, governor of New France, (by which name Canada was then known), wishing to establish relations with the great Indian Tribes of the interior, came to Hochelâga where he chose a site and cleared ground for the proposed trading post. The spot chosen was immediately above a small stream (now covered by Commissioners and Foundling streets), which entered the River St. Lawrence at Point à Callière; here, on the margin of the stream, he built a wall of bricks which he made from the clay, but no Indians appearing, the island was again left to solitude and thirty years elapsed ere its forests sent back the echo of European voices.

On the 18th of May 1642, Paul de Chomedy, Sieur de Maisonneuve, a devout Christian, an able statesman, and a valiant soldier, having accepted the position of governor of the newly acquired isle, which had been purchased from the Company of "One Hundred Associates," for the sum of seventy five thousand livres, with his little flottilla, a pinnace, a flat bottomed craft moved by sails, and two row-boats, approached Montreal, resolved to settle a Colony there, "even if every tree on the Island were an Iroquois." Gliding along the green and solitary shores, now thronged with the life of a busy City, he landed on the spot where Champlain, 31 years before, had chosen as the first site for a settlement. It was a tongue or triangle of land formed by the junction of a rivulet with the St. Lawrence. This rivulet was bordered by a meadow, and beyond rose the forest with its vanguard of scattered trees. Early spring flowers were blooming in the young grass, and the birds flitted among the boughs.

Maisonneuve sprang ashore and fell on his knees. His followers imitated his example, and all joined their voices in songs of thanksgiving. Tents, baggage, arms and stores were landed. An altar was raised on a pleasant place near at hand which

Mademoiselle Mance and Madame dela Peltrie decorated. Now, all the company gathered before the shrine. In the centre was Maisonneuve's warlike figure, erect and tall, his men clustering around him—soldiers, sailors, artisans and laborers,—all alike soldiers at need. They bent in reverent silence as the Host was raised aloft; and when the rite was over, the priest turned and addressed them: You are a grain of mustard seed that shall rise to grow till its branches overshadow all. You are few but your work is the work of God. His smile is on you, and your children shall fill the land.

The afternoon waned; the sun sank behind the western forest, and twilight came on. Fireflies were twinkling over the darkened meadows. They caught them, tied them with threads into shining festoons, and hung them before the altar. Then they pitched their tents, lighted their fires, stationed their guards, and lay down to rest. Such was the birth-night of Montreal "

We will now pass over the struggles of the early Colonists, the attacks by Indians, disease, disputes and all the other accompaniments of such an enterprise and come at once to the year 1694 when three rich French gentlemen, M.M. Charon, Le-Ber & Fredin proposed founding an Institution for the relief of the sick and aged poor. The establishment began under the most flourishing auspices: the hearty good will of the Diocesan Bishop, a grant of land from the Sulpicians, who were the "Seigneurs of the Island," which land extended from Foundling street to the banks of the St. Lawrence, being the same locality and almost the same spot where the renowned Champlain had, 84 years previously, made the first clearance and laid the foundation of his proposed trading post,—then came the Royal sanction under Letters patent by His Majesty Louis XIV, in which the establishment is styled "General Hospital of Villemarie."

During the management of Mr. Charon, the Hospital made rapid progress in prosperity and importance; but after his death his successors proved to be ill-qualified to direct the affairs of the establishment; the brotherhood was reduced to two or three in number and the hospital was irretrievably in debt. It finally succumbed and the whole estate was therefore handed over to the Seminary of St. Sulpice.

In 1737, the Rev. Mr. Normant, a Sulpician, acting in his capacity of Vicar-General, of Parish priest and also as the representative of the Seigneurs of the Island, sought out means of resuscitating the defunct establishment by the selection of a person capable of making it once more a home for the needy and infirm. His choice fell on a widow lady, President of the confraternity of the Holy Family, who like another Tabitha had made herself a mother to the poor.

Although awed at the thought of undertaking such a work as that proposed by Mr. Normant, Mde d'Youville, which was the lady's name, accepted in obedience to the voice of her spiritual Director and in union with three pious companions, also devoted to works of charity, rented a small house and entered it on the 30th October 1738 with four or five infirm poor, the first foundations of a new order. All good works generally meet with opposition and the charitable ladies soon felt the effects of popular prejudice and ill-will. The public suspecting the designs of the Seminary in regard of the Charon Institution, were the promoters of the insensate persecution, while Mde d'Youville's relatives added their voices to the popular clamor.

The Rev. Mr. Normant foreseeing coming events, had prepared the little nucleus for the approaching trial and in a few appropriate words armed them for the battle. "The Cross is everything to the Christian. It is his light, his guide, his armor. Like the walls of a fortified city, it must invest him all round, —there must be no breach,—it must be raised on the ramparts

and planted in the plains. Let him lower his eyes or raise them on high, the cross must be before him everywhere. It is the sign of combat but it is also that of victory. "*In hoc signo vinces.*"

The fury of the ignorant rabble was raised to such a pitch that Mde d'Youville and her companions were publicly hooted on appearing in the streets, pelted with stones and derisively called "Les Sœurs Grises" (the Grey Nuns). The malicious reports circulated against the ladies, especially that of their furnishing the Indians with alcohol and of making too free a use of it themselves, gave rise to the epithet "Sœur Grise," (Grey Nun), the word grise (grey) bearing a double meaning in French, viz: a color, or tipsy.

Three years of joint suffering and of philanthropic labor had been added to the lives of these Christian heroines, when one of their number was called to her reward; and the Rev. Mr. Normant, the promoter of the budding Institute, and their guide throughout, became seriously indisposed and for a few months his recovery seemed doubtful. As the primitive Christians grew and increased in spite of tyranny and torture, so did the little Society expand and develop, for three young ladies offered themselves to Mde d'Youville to share her trials and her labors. Their offer was accepted and the little band were now six in number. As the helpers increased, so did the poor augment likewise, and the work was developing slowly but surely, when the crowning trial came which was to test their zeal to its utmost. Between the hours of night and morning, on the last day of January 1745, the whole homestead was discovered to be in flames. The inmates were roused from their slumbers by the cries of "Fire, fire," and having no time to vest themselves, rushed out in their night garments. Once free from the devouring element, Mde d'Youville gathered her weeping flock around her—one alone was missing—a poor silly girl had gone back for her wooden shoes (sabots), and had perished in

the flames. Shivering in the wintry blast, partly clad and no place of refuge open to them, the agonizing group besought the Ladies, with frantic cries not to leave them perish of hunger and of cold. Their miserable state excited the commiseration of a rich merchant, Mr. Fonblanche, who gave them the temporary use of one of his houses, while several other charitable persons furnished bedding and other indispensable articles ; finally the Seminary supported them entirely for nearly a year and six months after the accident.

Nine years training in the school of adversity, prepared Mde d'Youville and her companions for the tasks that lay before them, and the trials that awaited them in the new era on the eve of dawning.

After many solicitations and years of patient waiting, the Governor, M. de Beauharnois, finally consented to give the charitable Ladies possession of the old Building, called the "General Hospital," on condition they should repair it at their own expense and support the two infirm old Brothers who were the last relics of the "Charon Foundation." The conditions were hard, for years of mis-management and neglect had told on the once substantial edifice which was now a delapidated ruin with crumbling walls and windows requiring no less than 1226 panes of glass, but under Mde d'Youville's supervision the most urgent repairs were at once undertaken, and in October 7th 1747 the first "Grey Nuns" with their family of poor made their home within its walls, and the "Hospital" heretofore improperly called "General," became such now, through Mde d'Youville's extensive charity.

Wards were opened for the reception of aged men and women, invalided soldiers, incurable diseases, orphans of both sexes, insane persons, and Magdalens.

On the 3rd of June 1753, the little Association of Ladies received the Royal sanction, transferring to them under the title

of "Sisters of Charity" of the "General Hospital," the rights and privileges granted the "Hospitaller Brothers" by Letters Patent in 1694. The title, now claimed by others of recent date, belongs by right to the Sisters of Charity, whose Institution's real name is "General Hospital of Montreal." "Grey Nunnery" is only a popular appellation given of later years to the Establishment.

The peculiar dress which characterizes the Sisterhood at the present day was adopted by mutual consent and worn for the first time in August 25th 1755.

From the date of its foundation, till 1744, the "General Hospital" was without enclosure of any kind, but prudence now suggested the erection of a fence or wall, to surround the precincts of the Convent, and Mde d'Youville undertook the task which required four years for completion. It was not the Sisters' intention to close themselves in from all intercourse with an outer world, or to restrict their zeal to the Convent boundaries, for the Nuns issued forth daily on their missions of love to succor the needy in their own little homes; nor was their charity limited to one nation, for Mde d'Youville had taught her companions the lesson she herself practised so admirably. No suffering member of humanity, whatever his country might be, was an alien or a stranger to the great heart of the generous foundress.

Hardly had the Colonists earned a respite from Indian warfare, than they entered into the phase of a fiercer contest with a powerful nation, who had come, fully resolved to supplant the Lilly of France, by the Lion of England. The rumors of war entered within the cloistered precincts, filling the Sisters' hearts with sorrow at the thought of the fate which awaited their kindred and country,—but no demur on their part from their self imposed tasks,—fathers and brothers might fall 'neath the foeman's steel, but to them was allotted, to tend, to heal and

to shelter alike, both friend and foe. In 1756, while the war was raging between France and England, a pestilence, (whose very name produces a panic in our days,) broke out among the Indians and was so violent that it carried off half the tribes of the Algonquins and the Nipissingues and soon extended to the hostile forces. It was at this juncture Mde d'Youville indiscriminately threw open her Establishment, reserving one large ward for the english soldiers, styled therefrom: "La Salle des Anglais," "The Englishman's ward," and in 1776 the account books of the Grey Nunnery showed the sum of \$18,000 expended for the relief and the support of English prisoners of war,—not one cent of which was ever made good by either the French or the English Governments. In 1757, the magnanimous woman, hearing that an English soldier was about being put to the torture, paid two hundred francs to the savages for his ransom. The released captive remained with the sisters and afterwards became keeper of the English Infirmary, and was known as "Jean l'Anglais," "John the Englishman." Several other strangers were also kept in the establishment, but owing to the difficulty experienced by the French sisters in pronouncing foreign words, they shared John's surname,—hence came the entries in the records of Christopher Englishman, Jack Englishman, &c., &c. The Rev. Mr. Lavalinière, a Sulpician, ransomed a Mrs. O'Flaherty and her daughter whom he found bound to the stake. Both mother and child were sent to the Grey Nunnery where they were received with open arms, and in the course of time the young girl became a Grey Nun. Numerous well authenticated stories are preserved in the Archives of the Establishment, telling how, time and again, they saved soldiers from the reckless fury of the Indians. The savages respected the sisters while hostile to every one else. On one occasion the red men pursued a party of scouts into the very Convent, and the Nuns had to hide them in the vaults. The Indians departed

after a fruitless search, but the next trouble was to screen them from the wounded savages in the Hospital. This they accomplished by vesting them in the cloak and hood of the Sisterhood, thus smuggling them through the wards. One day, however, while the Sisters were stealthily conducting an English soldier, in his grey costume, an Indian small-pox patient discovered the benevolent cheat, by his keenness of scent, and starting in hot pursuit was with difficulty restrained. On another occasion, while Mde d'Youville was sitting alone in the Community room busily occupied preparing a large tent, a door leading from the grounds was suddenly thrown open and a young soldier burst in with terror depicted on every feature. Mde d'Youville knew at a glance that he was pursued, and hastily raising the ample folds of linen that lay at her feet, she made him sign to crouch underneath. Hardly had he done so when a furious savage, with tomahawk raised, rushed into the apartment. Mde d'Youville quietly pointed to an opposite door, which happened to be open, and the Indian mistaking the sign, and thinking his victim had gone that way, started in hot pursuit, to continue elsewhere his fruitless search. Many were saved through the bravery and presence of mind of this admirable woman.

During the month of August 1760, alarming reports circulated amongst the citizens of Villemarie, that three divisions of the enemy's army were rapidly approaching. These reports were confirmed on the 6th of September by the appearance of the Division from Lake Ontario and the arrival of the two others the next day. Montreal was now invested by an army of 32,000 English soldiers and their Indian allies. The beleaguered city was ill prepared to resist so formidable an army, being only nominally fortified with no more than 2500 troops to defend it. The enemy had all the advantage, both in point of numbers and in implements of war, yet the English Generals seemed inclined to turn the whole force of their artillery to bear on the ill-fated

City, which one night alone of bombardment would suffice to reduce to ashes.

Mistaking the Hospital with its stone walls for some fortified place, the command was given to open fire on it. The cannons were rapidly drawn into position,—the men at their post, when a soldier stepped out from the ranks, saluted his General and respectfully informed him that the threatened building was only an Institution under the care of Nuns, to whose charity and presence of mind he, and several of his comrades, owed their lives, relating at the same time his own narrow escape from the Indian's scalping knife. The order for destruction was countermanded and several officers, some of whom spoke French fluently, sent to visit the Hospital and furnish a report. Mde d'Youville, informed of the arrival of the deputation, received them in her own gracious way, brought them through her whole Establishment and allowed them to depart only after partaking of a luncheon. Her natural politeness and dignified manners won the esteem of the Officers who reported most favorably to the Commander-in-Chief, and the Hospital was saved.

Meanwhile the citizens, a prey to the utmost terror at the sight of the army which encompassed them, assembled in a body to implore M. de Vaudreuil to save them and their families. The day following, which was the 8th of September, M. de Vaudreuil signed the treaty of capitulation, and Canada took refuge under the folds of the Union Jack.

The same year the Colony was ceded to England, Mde d'Youville, during one of her customary visits to the poor of the city, discovered in the ice of the creek or rivulet, which ran through Foundling street, the body of an infant with a dagger in its throat, and horrified at the sight, the generous woman resolved then and there, in order to hinder a double crime, to adopt all unfortunate castaways.

The Colony was still suffering from the disastrous effects of the war, and the Hospital funds were at their lowest ebb, but trusting to that Divine Providence which had never failed, she began the work which her spiritual daughters continue to the present day. The registers of the General Hospital "Grey Nunnery," bear the names of (30,300) thirty thousand and three hundred foundlings.

"Certain newspapers of our city fill their columns with hard sayings relating to the number of foundlings that die yearly in our Establishment," said a sister to whom I spoke on the subject. "They accuse us of neglect, &c., &c., and insinuate as much as if we actually helped to destroy the poor little creatures. During the time that these tirades were raging, some years ago, I went to visit a sick protestant lady. While at her house, one of her friends called to see her; I was introduced and after a few sentences of ordinary conversation, the new comer turned at once to the newspaper topic, which I saw she heartily endorsed, and asked me in a cutting tone, was it not through neglect or want of maternal affection that so many of our foundlings died yearly?" "Why, Mrs. C...," said the sick lady, taking upon herself to answer, "how is it that you, who have had eight children, could only rear one, and a delicate child, that one is? Do you accuse yourself of neglect or of want of maternal affection?"

"This home thrust was sufficiently conclusive," added the Sister, "I had nothing more to say. Our Protestant neighbors opened a foundlings' Home and were sanguine of good results. We were glad they did so, knowing what the consequences would be. They cannot say *Veni, vidi, vinci*, but We came, we tried, and we failed."

The little Society of charitable Ladies now styled "Sisters of Charity," had reason to rejoice at the rapid development of their Establishment which increased and improved year by

year, notwithstanding the many trials and adversities experienced during its infancy. It would have been only natural that the peace of the present day should obliterate the remembrance of the turmoil of the past, but undoubtedly a prophetic foresight of trials to come, led the Foundress to select as motto for the Official Seal of the General Hospital, a luminous Cross, surrounded by the words : *In hoc signo vinces*. It was truly by the Cross and through the Cross they should triumph.

On the 18th of May 1771, the General Hospital or Grey Nunnery became a prey to the flames, and naught remained of the whole building with its outhouses, &c., but a heap of ruins.

The sisters with their family of poor were again without house or home, but the courage and energy which upheld Mde d'Youville on a former occasion, were not wanting now. With aid from the Seminary St. Sulpice and other Religious Communities, the sisters and their suffering flock were sheltered and supported till, like the Phoenix of old, their Home arose anew from its own ashes.

Six years more did the admirable Foundress labor with her companions, sharing their hardships and their toil, instructing them through her example and guiding them by her superior wisdom and virtue.

Rejoicing to see her Hospital once more in a flourishing condition with a sisterhood to continue and perpetuate her works, she departed this life on the 23rd of December 1771 in the 70th year of her age.

The night of her death the people in the vicinity remarked a large luminous Cross over the Establishment, which it in a manner covered, and persons passing in the streets at the time, on seeing it hastily asked each other : "What new misfortune was going to befall the poor Grey Nuns?"

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SKIPPING with a bound the period of 80 years, during which time the Grey Nunnery grew and prospered, we arrive at 1847, the year of the terrible ship fever.

The horrors of that period caused by the frightful famine and the terrible plague which followed and made Ireland desolate, can never be forgotten. The beautiful green fields of that fertile country refused food to the famished children of its soil. -- death in its most frightful form stalked through the land and thousands died in their cabins or lay uncoffined on the road sides. Hundreds and thousands of others fled across the sea to seek on a foreign shore that peace, plenty and happiness denied them in the land of their forefathers. They turned their eyes towards America, the Eldorado of their fondest hopes and bright was the picture which their imagination drew of a life in the Western World. Alas! carrying with themselves the seeds of the contagious disease, many died on shipboard and were buried in the ocean's depths, while the treacherous billows alone sang the funeral dirge; others landed on the shores of Canada only to expire. On the 17th of June 1847, the news reached the Grey Nunnery that hundreds were dying unaided and unattended on the shores and at Point St. Charles. The Superior at this time, the venerable Sister Elizabeth Forbes, of Glengarry, called Sister McMullen, believing there must be truth in the report, chose Sister Ste Croix to accompany her, and starting out at once to the specified locality, found to her astonishment and sorrow that for once report fell short of the truth. Acting promptly and decisively, she collected all the

facts and laid them, in the shape of a Report, before the Emigration Agent, requesting powers to act so as to ameliorate the fate of the unfortunate Irish immigrants. These powers were at once and cheerfully given and she was authorized to act as she thought best, to hire as many men and women as she deemed necessary to aid in the noble work, and those assistants would be paid by the Department, upon the signature of the Sisters.

All preliminaries settled, Sister McMullen retraced her steps homewards, but with a heavy heart, for, like Abraham of old, she had gathered the faggots and prepared the funeral pile,—the victims alone were wanting.

It was the hour of recess. The Sisters, young and old, were gathered in the Community room, the conversation was animated, and from time to time peals of laughter issued from one group or the other. The Superioress Sister McMullen entered, and the Sisters all rose to receive her. Taking her seat in the circle she signalled for general attention, and after a short pause, said: "Sisters, I have seen a sight to-day that I shall never forget. I have been to Point St. Charles and saw hundreds of sick and dying huddled together. The stench emanating from them is too great for even the strongest constitution. The atmosphere is impregnated with it and the air filled with the groans of the sufferers. Death is there in its most appalling aspect. Those who thus cry aloud in their agony are strangers but their hands are outstretched for relief. Sisters, the plague is contagious." Here the venerable Superior burst into tears and with a broken voice, continued: "In sending you there, I am signing your death warrant, but you are free to accept or to refuse." There was a pause of a few seconds, during which, rapid as the lightning flash, each Sister saw herself kneeling in imagination once more before the Altar steps, again hearkening to the Bishop's solemn warning, before she pronounced the

irrevocable vows : " Have you *considered attentively* and *reflected seriously* on the step you are now going to take ? That from this out your life must be one of *sacrifice*, even of *death* if the glory of God or the good of your neighbour requires it ? " " Yes, my Lord, and I am willing to undertake the task, with God's help. " Such were the words once uttered by each of those who now were called on to prove their fidelity. There was no hesitation, no demur, for all arose and stood before their Superior while the same exclamation escaped from every lips, " I am ready. " Sister McMullen knew the courage of her spiritual daughters as Madame d'Youville knew that of her companions. Out of this willing number eight were chosen and the following morning saw the sisters cheerfully depart to fulfil the task allotted them.

On arriving at Point St. Charles three large sheds of from 150 to 200 feet long, by 40 to 50 wide, met their view. Separating, the little band of pioneers entered the sheds with the persons they had engaged to assist in the work of resuscitation or of death. What a sight before them ! " I almost fainted, " said one of the Sisters, relating her emotions on that eventful day, " when on approaching the entrance of this sepulchre, the stench suffocated me and I saw the number of beings with distorted features and discolored bodies lying huddled and heaped together on the ground, looking like so many corpses. I knew not what to do. I could not advance without treading on one or other of the helpless beings in my path. While in this perplexity my senses were recalled into action on seeing the frantic efforts of a poor being trying to extricate himself from among the prostrate crowd, his features expressing at the same time an intensity of horror. Treading with precaution, placing the point of one foot where a small space could be found, and then so on with the other, I managed to get near the patient who, exhausted after the efforts made to call our attention, now lay back pillowed on. Good God, what a sight ! Two discolored corpses

already in a state of decomposition. We set to work quickly now. Clearing a small passage, we first carried out the dead bodies, and then after strewing the floor with straw, we replaced thereon, the living, who soon had to be removed in their turn. In the open space between the sheds, lay the inanimate forms of men, women and children, once the personification of health and beauty, with loving and ardent hearts, now destined to fill a nameless grave. More sick immigrants arriving from day to day, new sheds had to be erected, till at last 24 of these temporary hospitals stood side by side, each one containing about 180 common cots, or rather plank boxes, littered with straw, in which often three poor fever-stricken victims lay down to rise no more. Eleven hundred human beings tossed and writhed in agony at the same time, on these hard couches. The hearse could hardly suffice to carry off the dead. From eight Sisters the number increased till none save the principal officers, the superannuated and those absolutely necessary to maintain the good order of the Establishment, remained at the Grey Nunnery. The ardor of the sisterhood continued unabated and until the 24th of the month (June) no Sister had been absent from the muster roll. On this eventful morning, two young Sisters could no longer rise at the sound of the matin bell. The plague had chosen its first victims and shortly more were to follow, till 30 lay at the point of death. The professed Nuns of the Establishment amounting only to 40, could not suffice to superintend their Institution, tend their sick sisters, 30 of whom now had the fever, and assist at the sheds. There were at this time 25 Novices, who now ardently requested to be allowed to fill up the vacancies in the ranks. Their offer was accepted and side by side with the professed Sisters did they toil and triumph—for what else is death when it gives the martyr's crown? Fears were entertained for the safety of the Convent, which fears increased still more when eight Sisters were called to re-

ceive their reward. Withal the Sisters held on unflinchingly to their duty and continued their charitable ministrations not only throughout the year 47 but also during the following, when the Cholera replaced the Typhus.

From the Cross came the Crown. The numbers of pretendants to a religious life increased in such ratio during this same year (48) that the motto of the Nunnery was truly verified: "In hoc signo vinces."

Amongst the arrangements for the better attendance of the unfortunate victims of the Typhus, was the classification of men, women and children in different sheds. The children counted by hundreds—the greater number as yet free from the malady but exposed to contagion and liable to fall from day to day. They were there huddling together in groups—the infant taken from its dead mother's breast, now in the arms of some older one trying in vain to still its cries—the little toddlers shrieking for the papa and mama who would never more respond to their call—the sobs of others, with their frantic efforts to escape and search for the parents already beneath the sod. The scene in the children's shed was beyond description. Their wailing was heard all over, adding a new pang to the agony of an expiring father or mother. His Lordship Bishop Bourget daily visited the sheds and sought out means of procuring a home for the unfortunate waifs. An appeal was made to the country people who, faithful to the voice of their Pastor, came from all the surrounding Parishes of the Diocese and each family adopted one or more of the strangers. Amongst the number of those who thus found a home, were a boy and girl chosen by parties living in different parishes. The adopted parents of both were in good circumstances—having no family of their own,—reared and educated the children of their adoption according to their means and position in life. Years passed by and the remembrance of the sheds with the language of their youth had faded

from the memory of both boy and girl. One had attained the years of manhood, the other was a blooming maiden in her teens. After this interval of separation they met again but as perfect strangers, without the slightest remembrance of the past. They were introduced to each other under the names of their adoption, and after a short acquaintance, the young folks, with the full consent of the elders, agreed to unite their fate. It was a gala day for the two parishes when the young couple stood side by side at the altar to pledge their vows, and many were the good wishes that followed them to the pretty home built and furnished by the loving care and generosity of the parents on both sides. Some four or five years of married life had passed by and two pretty children were equally petted and spoiled by the proud grand parents. No thought of trouble or sorrow entered their happy little home, till one day the rumor arose that a stranger had called on the priest, to ask his aid in finding her sister's children, who according to indications given, were in one or other of the Parishes. She held the proofs, alas! too true, that the husband and wife, so happy in each other's love, according to the laws of God and man, must rend the ties now powerless to bind them. The heretofore husband and wife were already brother and sister. "Words cannot describe the effect of the discovery. It seems to me that I still witness their grief and hear their frantic cries," were the words of the Sister who related the circumstance from her own personal knowledge.

Eight Grey Nuns, amongst whom is the present Superioress General, are still living out of the thirty who caught the Typhus at the sheds and were at death's door. The souvenir of these events, which could furnish one of the most touching episodes in the history of the city of Montreal, will pass away with the actors in the sad Drama. All that now remains to attest the fact, is a little spot of ground, at Point St. Charles, neatly fenced in and on which has been raised a mortuary monument, con-

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sisting of an immense bolder taken from the bed of the St. Lawrence river, bearing the following inscription :



To preserve from desecration the remains of 6000 Immigrants who died of Ship Fever A. D. 1847-8, this stone is erected by the workmen of Messrs. Peto Brassey & Betes, employed in the construction of the Victoria Bridge, A. D. 1859.

III

THE brave and generous Trio that put their shoulder to the wheel and started the Institution, whose progress I have followed to the present year, could not wish a greater success than that which has resulted from so small a beginning. To each of the three, who were the foundation stones of the Establishment, hundreds of others have arisen to replace them. Their works extended and new Houses sprung into existence. Montreal alone possesses eight charitable Institutions under the care of the Grey Nuns, viz : Orphanages, Infant Schools, Homes for the infirm and aged, an Academy for the Blind, a Hospital, a Night Refuge, and a Servants' Home. Seven others are in Parishes outside the City, but in the Diocese of Montreal, and four in the United States, in Salem and Lawrence, Mass.; in Toledo, Ohio; and at Fort Totten, Dakota Territory. Three large Convents also enacted from the Mother-House with the rights of founding others in turn, viz : those of St. Hyacinthe, Quebec and Ottawa, but they are distinct branches independant of the General Hospital (or Grey Nunnery.)

It appears that neither hardships in perspective nor in reality, can daunt the courage of Mde d'Youville's spiritual daughters when any good is to be done. This must surely be the case, for in 1844 a colony of Grey Nuns consented to leave their Convent Home in Canada and isolate themselves amongst the wilds of nature in the far Nor' West, to devote their lives to the relief of the Indian tribes and the education of youth. Their principal Establishment is in St. Boniface, Manitoba, being now

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a Vicarial House with four other missions in that Diocese. Proceeding further on, we discover in the Vicariates of Bishops Grandin & Faraud, the Convents of St. Albert, that of Lac-la-Biche, or Red Deer Lake, of Ile à la Crosse, of Athabaska and almost on the borders of the extreme North, that of Providence, McKenzie River. All these Houses have each a local Superior who is subject to the Mother Vicar of St. Boniface; she in turn owes allegiance to the Superioress General of the Grey Nunnery, Montreal.

A veritable mania has seized speculators, during the last year or two, who have gone in crowds to Manitoba. The trip is now an agreeable one, accomplished in five or six days, thanks to the Rail Cars, luxurious Pullman, &c., &c.; but when the Grey Nuns migrated to the Red River in 1844, it took three months. A few extracts from letters written by the Nor' West Sisters to the Mother House in Montreal, will give you a good idea of what they had to undergo:

"Our mode of conveyance is an antique cart with high wooden wheels and drawn by an ox. For days we travel through the midst of vast prairies, the bright sky overhead, seas of waving grass as far as the eye can reach, one of nature's primeval forests in the distance, a few streamlets and finally a river to interrupt our progress. Neither bridge nor boat existing, we must devise means to reach the opposite shore. When the current is strong and the river wide, the men construct a small raft, made of the branches of trees; on this raft we and all the baggage are carried across. The frail construction is guided and sent onwards by men swimming on each side. If no wood be found in the vicinity of the river, a cart wheel is taken off a vehicle, a buffalo robe thrown over it and on this Thetis car we brave Neptune's wrath. A half-breed or Indian has to draw or push our frail boat forward. If the men of the caravan be not numerous enough, a cord is fastened to the wheel and

thence to the horns of an ox, the other end is given us to hold and guide our bark to the best of our ability. So long as the weather continues favorable, our caravan proceeds on in this manner, halting each day about sun set. The oxen are then let loose to graze, search is made for fuel, the fire is lighted, the kettle put on and the evening meal prepared. After the repast, prayers are said, our tent put up and our bed, a buffalo robe, spread on mother earth. On this *soft* couch we repose as best we may, to rise again at 3 next morning. The tent is lowered, morning prayers offered up, the men go in search of the oxen, left free during the night, the fire is renewed, the morning meal prepared and eaten. Breakfast over, dishes washed, the fire is carefully extinguished, the order to mount and to proceed issued, and our caravan begins another day's journey. On, on, through the boundless solitudes, whose silence is relieved only by the song of the birds, the chirping of the locusts, the murmur of the breeze, the rustling of the leaves, the creaking of the cart wheels, the call or shout of the drivers, the cracking of their whips as they urge on some weary or stubborn beast. Such is life in the Prairies when the sun shines; but when the tempest rages, with the wind blowing, the lightning flashing, the thunder pealing and the rain pouring in torrents, a halt in the prairie or in the wild woods, under a simple tent that every gust threatens to carry off and no other bed than a buffalo robe on the wet ground, — pleasure is no longer a reality. Even when the weather is fine, we are followed, surrounded, swarmed and literally devoured by the most glutinous creatures in creation. They stalk about in day light, they revel during twilight, respect not even the shades of night, yet have the effrontery to "sound their own trumpet." I allude to the mosquito, that venomous mite, whose sting condemns its victim to perpetual motion. It is nothing but scratch, scratch, scratch all the time till we are literally scarred from the process. It was during

our peregrinations through the prairie that I learnt the origin of these little plagues. Although I doubt of its veracity, I favor you with the account as I received it. It is not very flattering to our sex, therefore I tell it you "sub rosa."

Long before the white man left his trail on the grass of the Prairie and when the red men were master of all, an Indian of our tribe, said the narrator, took to his wigwam a squaw who turned out to be a perfect shrew. Her tongue like a bell sounded from morn till night, growing worse and worse as years wore on. All her husband's corrections failed to effect a change—she was beyond control. It was the hunting season and the tribe migrated to follow the moose, the buffalo and the bison. In the midst of plenty, the squaw sickened and died. The encampment was on the borders of a pretty stream but the tents were raised and all departed after placing a pyramid of stones to mark the woman's grave. The Indian warrior, without a sigh of regret, turned from the spot and strode off with light step and lighter heart. Two years had elapsed when the return of the hunting season saw the tribe encamped where the buffalo herded. Fate willed that the tents should be cast on the spot which had received the remains of the troublesome squaw. With a glance of satisfaction towards the funeral pile, and led by curiosity, the Indian approached and through the waving grass, saw the skeleton form, whole remnant of his departed wife. "Ha!" said he, "silent at last, you hard head in which wagged a noisy tongue." On saying the words, he kicked the skull, it opened and from the yawning cavity rushed forth a swarm of winged insects buzzing and biting in their wrath. On, on they gushed till he was completely envelopped by the trumpeting host. After wreaking their vengeance on the unfortunate man, they spread far and near, and ever since have held possession of the Prairies."

Wishing the Sisters success in their courageous undertakings and health to carry out their good designs, I bid farewell, for the present, to the land of the Aurora Borealis, which will furnish me, later, ample matter for other manuscripts to add to your collection. Meanwhile, I resume the details relating to the General Hospital or "Grey Nunnery" proper.

IV

THE City of Montreal continuing its progress, extending its limits, enlarging its commercial thoroughfares, the Corporation aimed at opening a street through the Hospital grounds, which street would be a continuation of St. Peter's down to the wharf. So far from wishing to cede their land, the Sisters needed even more to carry on the many works they had undertaken. Their eyes were finally opened to innovations of commerce in their vicinity. Surrounded on all sides by stately buildings, sounds of busy traffic filling the air, forests of masts from the ships in the harbor, towering over their walls,—all tended to prove that the time had come for them to quit the oasis where their Order had grown, lived and prospered through one hundred and twenty-two years.

After mature deliberation, the fiat was issued, the order to migrate made known and the Grey Nuns henceforth looked on that home, the cradle of their religious life, with tearful eyes.

"Where would be their New Convent?" In a pleasant location certainly, on more extensive grounds, with a larger building made to suit the exigencies of the times. "Where in fine?"

"Tradition tells us, (said the Sister who has held the office of *Dépositaire* in the Grey Nunnery for the last 26 years and who is also one of the thirty spoken of in the former period), that in the beginning of the Colony of Villemarie, a fearful crime, which horrified the entire community, was committed. A good and industrious couple living on their well stocked farm, somewhere in the shadow of Mount Royal, had reared an adopted son. Arrived at the years of manhood and coveting the little possessions which would be his at the death of his foster parents, the wretch imbrued his hands in the blood of his benefactors. He was accused, found guilty and unanimously condemned by the Colonists to be torn asunder by wild horses. The punishment began at the scene of the crime and when the infuriated animals fell, through fear and exhaustion, the unhappy man was but a shapeless mass. With his last breath he avowed his guilt and was buried on the spot. A red cross, then and there erected, served to point out the murderer's grave, giving its name to the place, called thenceforth, the "Land of the Red Cross." I had the cross removed and planted a little further off. Search was made for the remains, supposed to lie underneath, but no trace of a skeleton was found. I know that some strata preserve, while others consume what is embedded therein. This may have been the case here. We began our Building in 1869."

On the 11th October 1871 the Sisterhood bade adieu to the General Hospital, the religious home which their Foundress had hallowed by her presence, precept and example. They tore themselves away, with grief at heart and tearful eyes, to ascend the hill on which their new Home is raised and to which they gave the appropriate name of "Mount of the Holy Cross." On,

on, they came, ascending, as Moses on Horeb, still on earth, yet to abide with God.

These last details had been furnished me in the Entrance Corridor, to which I returned after visiting the large Establishment, and glancing through a side window I saw the Cross that the Sister spoke of. Like all circles which end where they begin, after having "Gone around," I, once more reached the door. With thanks to the Sisters for the information I received, a gratification to the Janitor and my best bow, I made my exit.

"I hope all's right, Sir?" said my carman, as he jumped down from the elevated position where he had been nodding to all mankind, for the last two hours. "Yes, yes," I answered as I took my seat in the coach. "I have all the information I wanted, and a perfumed rosebud in my button-hole into the bargain, to serve as a pleasant

MEMENTO OF MY VISIT

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NOTES AND REMARKS.

—The General Hospital (Grey Nunnery) was founded April 15th 1694 and incorporated June 3rd, 1753.

—The present buildings were begun in 1869 and occupied in Sept. 1871.

—The land with the buildings, outhouses, fences, drainage, &c., cost nearly three hundred thousand dollars.

—One wing has been left unfinished for want of funds.

—It requires nearly fifty thousand dollars annually to support the institution, which amount is derived from the following sources, viz.:

1st The rents of houses and lands belonging to the Establishment.

2nd A grant from Government of \$4,200.

3rd The united industries of the Sisterhood.

4th The alms and donations of visitors and other charitable persons.

NATURE OF GOVERNING BODY:

The Superioress and her Council.

DISTRIBUTION OF OFFICES—NUMBER OF SISTERS IN EACH:

General Superioress.....	1	Flower Workers	8
General Assistant.....	1	Gold and Silk Embroidery.....	4
Sub-Assistants.....	2	Church Vestments.....	2
Novice Mistress.....	1	Vestuary	4
Sub-Novice Mistress	1	Sempstresses	5
Class Teachers for Novices.....	2	Laundry	1
Treasurer	1	Chandlery.....	1
Bookkeeper	1	Wax tapers, Altar bread, &c.....	1
Sub-Accountants	2	General Housework Supt	2
Agricultural Dept.....	2	Culinary Dept.....	2
House Stewards.....	2	Portress.....	1
Bursar for the Missions.....	1	Strangers Dept	1
Private Secretary	1	Shoemakers Dept.....	1
Under "	3	Men's Ward.....	2
Chronicler.....	1	Women's Ward.....	2
Organist and Choir Teacher	1	Orphan boys' Ward.....	2
Sacristains	2	Foundling boys Ward.....	2
Pharmacists (1).....	3	Infants Ward.....	2
Dispensaries.....	2	Orphan girls ward	2
Librarian	1	Outdoor poor Dept (2).....	4
Printing and Book-binding.....	3	Infirmarians	2
Works of Art.....	3	Reglementaires (3).....	2
Wax Statuary	2	Invalides.....	3

—The total number of inmates on the 31st December 1881 was eight hundred and two, and was classified as follows :

Aged and infirm men.....	76	Foundling boys and girls (5).....	222
“ “ women.....	199	Servants	18
Orphan Boys	28	Professed Nuns	95
Orphan Girls	97	Novices (4)	67

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- (1) The Sisters prepare a large amount of the Tinctures, pills, essences, cordials, syrups, salves, &c., used in the Establishment or distributed to the poor in the Dispensaries. They have also a very popular remedy of their own, called “Pancreateine,” which they dispose of in the Institution.

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- (2) Four Sisters daily visit the sick and poor living in the West end and succor them according to the means at their disposal.

Two thousand charity visits were paid to outdoor poor in 1881, and over ten hundred and forty night watches with the sick and dying. All the sisters who can perform this duty, take the night watches in turn. There were some nights when six Sisters left the Mother House together, to watch by the couch of outdoor patients.

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- (3) The office of the Sisters styled “Règlementaires,” is to ring the bells which announce the hours of each occupation, whether that of prayer or of labour. The matin bell rings at 4.30 A.M. both summer and winter. The last bell is at 9.30 P.M. The Reglementaires are also the Messengers charged to answer the Porters bell and inform the different Sisters whose presence is required in the Reception Rooms or elsewhere.

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- (4) The sixty seven Novices are alternately occupied as apprentices in the different Departments during the three years of their probation, before making their vows.

- (5) From seven to eight hundred foundlings are received yearly in the Institution. They are afterwards given out to hired nurses, who retain them till they are eighteen months old, at which time they are brought back to be reared in the Nunnery. The Sisters visit these nurses unexpectedly several times during the year, in order to assure themselves of the care that is taken of their charges. They have used all means in their power to diminish the mortality amongst these little waifs, but cannot succeed to rear more than one third of the number. It is the same case in all similar Institutions throughout the known world, where the Infants cannot have wet nurses.

The following statement shows the condition of Foundlings when received, during the year 1881 :

535 Partly clad.	274 Half frozen.
7 Naked.	10 Drugged with opium.
25 Syphilitic.	25 Wounded by instruments.
50 Umbilical Hemorrhage.	438 Sick.
23 Hemorrhage of the lungs.	49 Dying.
18 Dysentery.	1 Dead.
20 Unwashed.	16 Infirm.
20 Covered with vermin.	12 Exposed at the door.

These children come from various places, viz. : United States, Halifax, Quebec, St. Hyacinth, Sherbrooke, Ontario, and country places. Others supposed to be born in Montreal must have come from a distance on account of their exhausted state when handed in. A large number of the Foundlings also belong to mothers who come from various places to be received in the Lying-in Hospitals of Montreal.